

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 9829

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IV, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL-IVORY COAST RELATIONS

1. ARYE GABAY, THE ISRAEL INTERESTS OFFICER IN THE BELGIAN EMBASSY, CALLED ON EMBASSY OFFICERS DECEMBER 5, AT HIS REQUEST, TO DISCUSS REPORTS OF THE YAMOUSSOUKRO MEETING OF SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WITH PRESIDENTS HOUPHOUET AND SENGHOR. NEAR THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, DURING WHICH NOTHING NEW WAS DEVELOPED CONCERNING THE SOUTH AFRICAN TALKS, GABAY ASKED IF WE THOUGHT HOUPHOUET WANTED A VISIT FROM ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER RABIN. THE EMBASSY OFFICERS TENDED TO THINK NOT, IN VIEW OF HOUPHOUET'S RECENT SHIFT TO ALL-OUT SUPPORT FOR ARAB VIEWS, INCLUDING A STATE FOR ARAB PALESTINIANS.

2. GABAY THEN REVEALED THAT THERE ARE FREQUENT CONTACTS BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND HOUPHOUET AND THAT HOUPHOUET HAS ASKED FOR A HIGH LEVEL VISIT, BUT WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF THE ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVE SENT. GABAY REASONED THAT FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSES HOUPHOUET WANTED NOTHING LESS THAN A VISIT FROM PRIME MINISTER RABIN. GABAY SEEMED TO BE LOOKING FOR OUR SUPPORT FOR A REQUEST TO GOI THAT RABIN VISIT HOUPHOUET.

3. COMMENT: PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET SEEMS TO BE IN COMPETITION, FOR
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NOMINATION AT LEAST, FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE OF 1974.

4. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT YACE HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A THREE-WEEK "PRIVATE" VISIT TO EUROPE, CANADA AND THE U.S. DURING WHICH IT WAS RUMORED HE WAS SEEKING THE NECESSARY SIGNATURES FOR HOUPHOUET'S NOMINATION.

5. IF HOUPHOUET IS A SERIOUS CONTENDER FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE, THE RABIN VISIT, IF IT OCCURRED, WOULD HAVE TO BE PUBLIC. IN FACT, IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW IT COULD BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL, EVEN IF IVORY COAST WANTED TO.

6. AS THINGS STAND AT PRESENT IN OAU AND IN AFRICAN-ARAB RELATIONS WE DO NOT THINK HOUPHOUET IS SECURE ENOUGH WITH HIS ARAB FRIENDS TO HAVE A USEFUL MEETING WITH RABIN.

7. FROM ISRAEL'S POINT OF VIEW WE DO NOT SEE WHAT HOUPHOUET COULD DO FOR THEM VIS-A-VIS THE ARABS. HIS ABILITY TO GET ARABS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS TO ISRAEL MUST BE ALMOST NIL.

8. STILL, WE KNOW THAT HOUPHOUET TREASURES THE SOBRIQUET "MAN OF PEACE," THE TITLE USED BY THE WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW IN HONORING HOUPHOUET WITH THE MEDAL OF PEACE DURING ITS THIRD WORLD CONGRESS HELD AT ABIDJAN IN AUGUST OF 1973.

9. WE CAN SEE WHERE A VISIT FROM RABIN MIGHT HELP HOUPHOUET'S CANDIDATURE BUT WE CAN'T SEE WHETHER IT WOULD HELP ISRAEL OR HELP IVORY COAST'S RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD. SMITH

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